

July 2009

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Chairman's Message

Eric Buermann, Governing Board Chairman



Six decades ago, on a humid July day, the five-member Governing Board of the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District — the South Florida Water Management District's predecessor — held its first official meeting in downtown West Palm Beach. A month later, the Governing Board chairman recommended periodically holding meetings at other locations throughout the region to ensure that local communities had ample opportunity for actively participating in the agency's work. That open government policy has been followed ever since.

At this month's Governing Board meeting — almost 60 years to the day of our first meeting — the Board adopted additional measures to maintain its commitment to public transparency as it began implementing new legislation, known as Senate Bill 2080.

Signed into law by Governor Charlie Crist on June 30, the new law requires the governing boards of the state's five water management to delegate their authority for certain permit approvals to their executive directors. The delegation addresses **consumptive water use**

and **environmental resource** permits. While the executive director will be responsible for permit approvals, permit denials will continue to come before the Governing Board for further review.

The Governing Board had considerable discussion interpreting exactly which permits it was required to delegate under the legislation, and it will seek an opinion from the Attorney General to ensure the South Florida Water Management District is executing its responsibilities as required by law. The Board also discussed at length the steps necessary for implementing Senate Bill 2080 effectively and maintaining public access in the permitting process. While opportunities to comment on permit applications were already in place before the new legislation, the Governing Board adopted a procedure that strives to keep the public engaged and informed about the permits pending before the agency. The new law prohibits, however, the Governing Board members from "intervening" in a permit application while it is being reviewed for agency action.

These expanded procedures include regularly scheduled monthly public meetings with the executive director and more information **online** so the public can follow every step of the process from beginning to end. The public will have multiple opportunities to comment before the executive director takes final action, ensuring the process is both collaborative and efficient. Further, the Governing Board decided to continue to maintain a standing agenda item on its monthly meeting agenda for the public to provide input directly to the Board on regulatory policy issues.

These enhanced permit review procedures go above and beyond the requirements of the new law to maintain as much public participation as possible. The Governing Board will continue to provide oversight and direction on regulatory policy, giving the public an additional layer of assurance that agency decisions are in the best interest of our resources and our constituents. I encourage you to visit the District's Web site and sign up for permitting notifications at www.sfwmd.gov/epermitting.

SFWMD Increases Transparency and Enhances Public Process for Regulatory Permitting Programs

At its July 8 meeting, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board strengthened its commitment to transparency and open government by increasing public access to its permitting process. The improvements are part of the District's implementation of new state legislation, known as Senate Bill 2080 (SB2080), that delegates authority for permit approvals to executive directors at the state's five water management districts.

The comprehensive legislation, passed by the Florida Legislature in May and signed into law by Governor Charlie Crist on June 30, also reauthorized Florida's five water management districts as part of the state's sunset review process. In addition, the bill offers greater protection for Florida's water resources and environment by encouraging the use of Florida-



friendly landscaping.

"Implementing this new law presents the South Florida Water Management District with an opportunity to increase public involvement and participation in the permitting process," said

SFWMD Executive Director Carol Ann Wehle. "We remain committed to increasing government transparency, encouraging public participation and upholding our commitment to protect South Florida's water resources."

Water management districts in Florida protect regional water supplies with environmental resource permits that regulate activities that could impact wetlands, alter surface water flows or contribute to water pollution. The districts also use consumptive use permits to regulate ground and surface water withdrawals by major users such as water utilities, agriculture and nurseries, golf courses, mining and other industrial users.

Currently, nearly 90 percent of permits are issued at the SFWMD staff level, with 10 percent going to the Governing Board for final action. Under the new legislation, applications for all permits will go to the agency's executive director. If staff recommends denial of the permit, the application must go to the Governing Board for further review.

To implement this law as well as to encourage public involvement, the SFWMD is employing several new and improved procedures. These actions include:

- Providing opportunities for interested stakeholders to meet with the SFWMD executive director or other appropriate staff members, prior to permit action, at regularly scheduled monthly meetings that will be webcast on the District's Web site. The first meeting of this type is scheduled for August 21 at the SFWMD headquarters in West Palm Beach.
- Posting a list of new applications received on the District's Web site and ePermitting portal weekly.
- Posting a list of applications deemed complete on the District's Web site and ePermitting portal weekly.
- Posting a list of individual permits issued the previous month on the District's Web site and ePermitting portal.
- Maintaining a standing agenda item on the Governing Board's monthly agenda for the public to provide input on regulatory policy issues.

Further, the public will have additional opportunities during the review process to comment on those projects determined to be of heightened public interest or where there is the likelihood of a request for an administrative hearing. Examples may include 20-year permits for public utilities, applications within or adjacent to a Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) project or permits that have generated significant public interest.

The new measures build on several open government initiatives already in place at the SFWMD. The SFWMD launched its Web-based ePermitting portal in 2005, allowing constituents to use an application/permit search engine to access information online. Since that time, ePermitting has been enhanced to allow customers to conduct a variety of business with the District, including submittal of environmental resource and consumptive use permit applications, submittal of information about permit compliance, access to fee schedules and automatic calculation of permitting fees. The tool also allows customers to apply for, track and manage permits online in real time, at anytime.

To date, nearly 200 people subscribe to the system's notice feature, allowing users to retrieve details on newly received applications, permits, regulatory consent agendas and rulemaking. ePermitting account holders can also subscribe to receive notice details in a weekly report that can be customized by each user, including information by notice type, location or permit type.

In January, the District completed the addition of more than 30 years of regulatory permit information to the existing ePermitting online database. The process required conversion to electronic format of more than 280,000 sheets of microfilm containing 9.1 million documents dating back to the 1970s. The result of the conversion project is direct, easy and quick public access to permit files, representing a more customer-friendly and cost-effective way to do business.

For more information on public meetings and ePermitting, or to access permit information and subscribe to the SFWMD's electronic noticing service, visit www.sfwmd.gov/ePermitting.

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One Year Later: Xtreme Yard Makeover's Water Conservation Lessons Celebrated

Florida-Friendly Landscaping Highlights Successful Demonstration



One year after giving a Naples "yard in need" an Xtreme Yard Makeover, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) celebrated its success last month, highlighting the water conservation lessons that were learned.

Completed in June 2008, the Xtreme Yard Makeover demonstrated how an unremarkable, water-wasting residential landscape could be transformed into a lush, Florida-friendly landscape that could save its owner time, money and water, while contributing less pollution-laden stormwater runoff to the neighborhood. The SFWMD partnered on the demonstration project with the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Services (UF/IFAS) Extension Office in Collier County and more than 35 sponsors, who offered their expertise, supplies and services for the transformation.

Recent state legislation now encourages Florida-friendly landscaping with the passing of **Senate Bill 2080**. Signed into law by Governor Charlie Crist on June 30, the comprehensive legislation encourages the use of Florida-friendly landscaping statewide as part of its

multiple components relating to water resources.

Specifically, the new law:

- Replaces the term "Xeriscape" with "Florida-friendly landscapes"
- Recognizes the UF/IFAS' Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, a public education and outreach program available through many UF/IFAS Extension offices
- Bans homeowners association covenants and/or local ordinances from prohibiting landowners from applying Florida-friendly landscaping to their property
- Requires water management districts to consider whether the applicable local government has adopted Florida-friendly landscaping ordinances when issuing consumptive use water permits
- Requires water management districts to use Florida-friendly landscaping around buildings and facilities

The Xtreme Yard Makeover was part of the SFWMD's ongoing efforts to create a year-round water conservation ethic that can help protect the water supply from South Florida's weather extremes. Outdoor landscape irrigation accounts for up to half of the 179 gallons used per person per day by South Florida residents — the highest water usage in the state. Florida-friendly yards, such as the one created in the **Xtreme Yard Makeover**, are low maintenance and require less water and pesticides yet can still provide a plant palette that includes color, diversity and wildlife habitat.

Florida-friendly landscaping emphasizes these nine major principles to help protect natural resources:

- 1. Right Plant, Right Place:** Native, drought-tolerant plants selected to suit a specific site will require minimal amounts of water, fertilizer and pesticides.
- 2. Water Efficiently:** Irrigate only when your lawn and landscape need water, complying with any irrigation restrictions. Efficient watering is the key to a healthy Florida-friendly yard and conservation of limited resources.
- 3. Fertilize Appropriately:** Less is often best. Over-utilization of fertilizers can be hazardous to your yard and the environment.
- 4. Mulch:** Maintaining a 3-inch layer of mulch will help retain soil moisture, prevent erosion and suppress weeds.
- 5. Attract Wildlife:** Plants in your yard that provide food, water and shelter can conserve Florida's diverse wildlife.
- 6. Manage Yard Pests Responsibly:** Unwise use of pesticides can harm people, pets, beneficial organisms and the environment.
- 7. Recycle:** Grass clippings, leaves and yard trimmings recycled on site provide nutrients to the soil and reduce waste disposal.
- 8. Reduce Stormwater Runoff:** Water running off your yard can carry pollutants such as soil, debris, fertilizer and pesticides that can adversely impact water quality. Reduction of this runoff will help prevent nonpoint source pollution.
- 9. Protect the Waterfront:** Waterfront property, whether on a bay, river, stream, pond or beach, is very fragile and should be carefully protected to maintain freshwater and marine ecosystems.

For a plant guide, as well as more information on Florida-friendly landscaping and water conservation tips, visit www.floridayards.org and www.savewaterfl.com

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Senate Bill 2080, Benefiting the Environment and the People of Florida

Guest Editorial from Michael W. Sole, Secretary, Department of Environmental Protection

On June 30, Governor Charlie Crist signed Senate Bill 2080, relating to water resources, into law. Although the bill is not perfect, it is my firm belief — a belief that I expressed to the Governor — that this bill should be signed for the many benefits it provides to both the environment and the people of Florida.



Although the new law requires the Governing Boards of the state's five water management districts to delegate authority to approve permits to their executive directors, each of the water management districts have been – and will continue to be – committed to open government and transparency.

The simple fact is nothing in Senate Bill 2080 diminishes, alters, or limits the ability of the public from inquiring or obtaining information about a permit application or objecting to an application.

While much attention has focused on delegation, many other aspects of the bill that offer greater protection for Florida's water resources have gone largely unnoticed. However, these changes will help ensure the protection and conservation of Florida's water resources. They include:

- Changes to Florida law regarding environmentally friendly landscaping. The use of Florida-friendly landscaping and other measures by homeowners is an effort to conserve Florida's water resources, which is in the best interest of all Floridians.
- Expands lands eligible to receive compensation to local governments. This provision puts into Florida law a commitment of the South Florida Water Management District to ensure the smaller Glades communities are not adversely impacted by the U.S. Sugar land acquisition.
- Streamlines government and saves taxpayer dollars – allowing meetings to be conducted via technology and authorizing the use of certain long-term permits.
- Provides fiscally sound policies that ensure the water management districts do not overextend their financial commitments.

Every drop of water makes a difference to Florida's future, and we must continue to protect and wisely manage our water resources. There is no doubt that Florida's environment is better protected when all stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process. As a result, I am committed to preserving the public process throughout this next year. I will continue working with the executive directors of the state's five water management districts to ensure openness and transparency. In addition, I look forward to working with the 2010 Legislature to develop a process that sustains transparency and stakeholder participation.

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Protecting Florida's Investment in Everglades Restoration

Letter to the Editor from Eric Buermann, Chairman, South Florida Water Management District



A recent *Palm Beach Post* article failed to tell the complete story of an Everglades restoration project or convey the steadfast commitment of the South Florida Water Management District to protect South Florida's precious ecosystem.

The Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir, located south of Lake Okeechobee, was designed to reduce harmful discharges to Florida's coastal estuaries, improve water quality and help achieve healthy water levels for the lake ecosystem that serves as the liquid heart of Florida.

However, a legal action challenging the construction permit led to the suspension of construction to safeguard public funds while the legal issues were resolved. Our governing board correctly decided it would be reckless to invest \$400 million of taxpayer monies in the next phase of a project whose "building permit" was being challenged.

Contrary to the article's claim of a false start, the District is planning on using that portion of the EAA reservoir constructed thus far as a key water-cleansing feature in the "River of Grass" project arising from our purchase of land owned by United States Sugar Corporation. At the end of the day, not a penny of taxpayer money invested so far will have been wasted.

Acquiring the U.S. Sugar lands will enhance the state-federal Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) by offering the flexibility to store and clean water of nutrients such as phosphorus on a scale never before contemplated.

With full public involvement, the District is currently engaged in a planning process to determine viable configurations for a managed system of water storage and treatment on the U. S. Sugar land. The work accomplished to date on the reservoir is envisioned to become a part of that restoration project.

The District remains committed to Everglades restoration, protecting the taxpayers investment with prudent planning and achieving the long-term environmental benefits that will bring significant returns on the current investment.

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SFWMD Staff Raises \$25,000 for Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation



Just over six years ago, Kathie Morris, a finance manager at the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), was diagnosed with breast cancer. To show support for Kathie, fellow co-worker and friend Claudia Kugler organized the first cancer support group among District employees, then dubbed "Kathie's Friends," to participate in the 2003 Komen South Florida Race for the Cure®. Ironically, Claudia herself was diagnosed with breast cancer less than two months later.

The medical battles Kathie and Claudia fought inspired other District employees, family, friends and survivors to join the fight against breast cancer. The 55 District employees who participated in the 2003 walk raised more than \$1,100. For the 2009 Komen South Florida Race for the Cure, the SFWMD team numbered 400 members, more than any other state or local government agency at the event. A series of fundraisers organized by District staff helped raise a total of \$25,000 for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation.

The Komen Foundation has formally recognized the SFWMD for having the largest governmental team entry at the 2009 Komen South Florida Race for the Cure. This is the sixth consecutive year the agency has received the award.

"I am extremely proud that our staff approaches this fundraising effort with greater resolve every year," said SFWMD Executive Director Carol Ann Wehle. "The amazing results, even in today's economic climate, exemplify what genuinely caring people work for this agency and the citizens of South Florida."

Since 2003, SFWMD employees have raised more than \$100,000 to benefit the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation.

"I remain truly grateful each year for the heartfelt commitment from my fellow co-workers proudly representing our 16-county region," added Kathie. "Each year I participate in the District's fundraising events and the race, hoping in some small way to 'pay it forward' to others who may need help during their own experience with breast cancer. Once you are diagnosed with breast cancer, you find yourself a member of a club you would give anything NOT to be a member of. You also find new friends and a new way of looking at life."

The 18th Annual Komen South Florida Race for the Cure was held January 31 along the Intracoastal Waterway in downtown West Palm Beach. It attracted more than 22,000 participants and raised more than \$1.7 million for the foundation. Of the money raised annually at the event, up to 75 percent stays in the area to fund valuable education, screening and treatment. The remaining 25 percent of the donations cover cutting-edge breast cancer research nationwide. The 5K run was first established in 1982 by Nancy G. Brinker after her sister, Susan G. Komen, died of breast cancer at the age of 36.

For more information on the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, visit www.komen.org

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Restoration Action!

Watch SFWMD Environmental Scientists Conduct an Everglades Cattail Study [video]



South Florida Water Management District scientists are conducting a one-year study of cattail in stormwater treatment areas (STAs) to determine how the plants are affected by higher water levels that are typically experienced after hurricanes or storm events. Healthy vegetation is a critical factor in effectively removing phosphorus from stormwater.

Too much phosphorus promotes an overgrowth of plant life and alters the habitat that Florida's native plants and animals need to thrive. The key purpose of STA wetlands is to remove phosphorus from urban and agricultural runoff flowing into the Everglades. STAs work by channeling water through shallow marshes filled with aquatic vegetation, including cattail, southern naiad and algae.

To improve vegetation management in STAs, scientists want to know the optimal water depth conditions needed for healthy cattail growth and to understand the stress signals when plants experience extreme water level conditions. Research in STA-1 East expands on previous studies that indicate that deepwater conditions do stress cattails and that, depending on the depth and length of time plants are exposed to these conditions, the damage may or may not be reversible.

At present, 52,000 acres of land south of Lake Okeechobee have been converted to STAs, yielding 45,000 acres of effective treatment wetlands. Another 11,473 acres of treatment wetlands are under construction and scheduled to be flow-capable in 2012. Since 1994, six STAs have retained more than 1,000 metric tons of total phosphorus that would have otherwise entered the Everglades.

VIDEO: Click here to get a bird's-eye view of SFWMD environmental scientists Felipe Zamorano and Hongjun Chen at work deep within the STA-1 East marsh.

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Bird-Watching Tours Continue at Renowned Everglades Treatment Wetland

SFWMD, Hendry-Glades Audubon Continue Successful Partnership to Provide Public Access to One of the Premier Bird-Watching Spots in the Country



An Everglades restoration project just south of Lake Okeechobee continues to live up to its reputation as a national bird-watching location.

Bird-watching tours continue this summer that are provided by the partnership between the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and the Hendry-Glades Audubon, whose experts lead public birding tours at the District-managed Stormwater Treatment Area 5 ([STA-5](#)) in Hendry County. Most tours are guided by Audubon's Margaret England, who recently received the District's first *Ambassador Award* to recognize her community service and commitment to assist the District and provide increased access to public lands. The next tour is scheduled for August 15.

"The diversity of species at STA-5 is truly breathtaking, and the partnership with the Hendry-Glades Audubon is a significant public service," said SFWMD Executive Director Carol Ann Wehle. "These treatment wetlands are effective at cleaning water flowing into the Everglades and, as an added benefit, have also become wildlife havens that showcase the

environmental and economic significance of Everglades restoration."

Birding, a national pastime, is big business, with 48 million people observing birds both around the home and through vacation travel. A 2001 report by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concluded that nationwide birding generated \$32 billion in retail sales and created 863,406 jobs.

Non-consumptive bird use (non-hunting activities) supported more than 19,000 jobs in Florida in 2006, and wildlife viewing activities generated more than \$3 billion statewide that year, according to a state report. Second in the nation only to California, birding in Florida generates an estimated \$477 million in retail sales in the state every year.

During the past 15 years, Stormwater Treatment Areas have proven to be the water-cleaning workhorses of Everglades restoration, utilizing plants to remove phosphorus from water flowing into the Everglades. Since 1994, six STAs — with a combined treatment area of approximately 45,000 acres — have retained more than 1,000 metric tons of total phosphorus that would have otherwise entered the Everglades. Overall, Florida has invested more than \$1.8 billion to improve Everglades water quality.

At each Stormwater Treatment Area, water levels are managed at an optimal depth for water quality improvements, which also creates an attractive habitat for wading birds. The District has taken steps to ensure the public has access at these sites for spectacular wildlife viewing as well as duck hunting, enhanced at STA-5 by construction of a waterfowl watching/hunting platform for disabled veterans and residents alike.

The District is committed to increasing recreational access to District lands, while continuing to manage them effectively to meet its environmental restoration, water supply, water quality and flood control missions. For more information on recreational opportunities, please visit www.sfwmd.gov/recreation. For more information on Florida bird watching, visit the [Great Florida Birding Trail](#).

To sign up for the STA-5 Birding Tour: Send an e-mail to Margaret England, at sta5birding@embarqmail.com with your name, contact information, including an emergency cell number for the tour day, the date you want to go and the number in your party. You may also leave a message at (863) 674-0695 or (863) 517-0202. For tour dates, see the latest [schedule](#).

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Celebrating 60 Years of Water Management

1980-Today, Restoring the South Florida Ecosystem

As part of its ongoing celebration of 60 years of public service, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) this month is looking back at the 1980s through today. Building on the increased environmental awareness of the 1970s, the last three decades have seen a variety of efforts to restore the South Florida ecosystem.

1980s: A Foundation for Restoration

The 1980s set the stage for the comprehensive ecosystem restoration efforts under way today. The decade brought several policies and programs to protect Florida's natural areas, including:



- Governor Bob Graham launched the Save Our Everglades program, creating the framework and foundation for restoration of the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades ecosystem.
- The Florida Legislature initiated aggressive land acquisition and water body protection programs, such as the Save Our Rivers program, to help preserve and improve lakes, rivers, wetlands and natural areas for future generations.
- The District conducted the Kissimmee River Demonstration Project to test the feasibility of returning portions of the channelized river back to its original winding path.
- Concerns for the failing health of Lake Okeechobee prompted an advisory committee to develop a series of recommendations for improving water quality.

In 1988, the U.S. State Attorney became involved in restoration efforts by suing the State of Florida to halt the flow of phosphorus and other pollutants into the Everglades. That same year, Governor Bob Martinez initiated the demonstration Everglades Nutrient Removal Project to reroute and treat runoff from the Everglades Agricultural Area on 4,000 acres of state-owned land. The parties involved in the lawsuit ultimately reached a settlement agreement in 1992 that established interim and long-term phosphorus concentration limits in the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge and Everglades National Park.

1990s: Revitalizing the Ecosystem

Recognizing the unintentional consequences of the regional flood control network on the natural environment, the U.S. Congress took two key steps toward revitalizing the ecosystem in the Water Resources Development Act of 1992 by:

- Authorizing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to restudy the Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project, the massive system of flood control works approved in the 1940s to harness and control water flow across a 16,000-square-mile area
- Directing the Corps to undertake restoration of the Kissimmee River, one of the largest ecosystem restoration projects in the world

Meanwhile, the Florida Legislature created two more land acquisition programs at the beginning and end of the decade by passing the Florida Preservation 2000 and Florida Forever acts.

In addition, legislators adopted the Everglades Forever Act to expand the scope of the state's water quality improvement efforts far beyond the terms of the 1992 settlement agreement. As a result of the act, the District today operates a network of six Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) south of Lake Okeechobee with a combined 45,000 acres of effective treatment wetlands. Since 1994, the STAs, combined with farming Best Management Practices, have prevented more than 2,800 metric tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades. To date, the state has invested more than \$1.8 billion in these and other projects to improve Everglades water quality.

2000-2001: Watershed Years

In the 2000 Water Resources Development Act, Congress authorized the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), a framework for restoring, preserving and protecting the South Florida ecosystem. Based on a 50-50 partnership between the state and federal governments, the 68 CERP project components were initially estimated to take 30 years at an estimated cost of \$8 billion. To help meet its share of the cost, the Florida Legislature passed the Everglades Investment Act, committing more than \$2 billion to CERP over the next 10 years.

In 2000, state legislators also passed the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act, a blueprint for reducing pollutant loads in the lake's watershed. A year later, the Corps completed the first phase of Kissimmee River restoration, backfilling 7.5 miles of canals, removing a major water control structure and recarving more than a mile of river channel.

2000s: Extreme Weather

Following the devastation of Hurricane Andrew's pinpoint strike in southern Miami-Dade County in 1992, Florida enjoyed several years of relative calm — until the 2004 hurricane season, the worst in the state's history. Between August 13 and September 25 of that year, hurricanes Charley, Frances, Jeanne and Ivan collectively caused more than \$45 billion in damage and dumped 30 inches of rain on the region, sending Lake Okeechobee water levels past 18 feet. A year later, Hurricane Katrina passed through on its way north, and Hurricane Wilma transected the lower Florida peninsula, damaging hundreds of thousands of homes. Through all of the storms, the regional flood control system controlled the flow of water and prevented serious damages.

Two years of historic hurricane activity and above-average rainfall were immediately followed by a historic, multiyear drought. 2006 and 2007 were the driest back-to-back years in South Florida history based on records dating back to 1932. As the cumulative rainfall deficit climbed, Lake Okeechobee sank to a record low of 8.82 feet in July 2007. The extreme water shortage prompted the

SFWMD Governing Board to impose the most stringent water restrictions in the agency's history in early 2008. The drought finally broke in August 2008 when Tropical Storm Fay dropped an average of 7.5 inches of rain on the region over a week.

2009 and Beyond: Unprecedented Opportunities

While the District has accomplished much over the last 60 years, the future holds even greater promise.

In May 2009, the Governing Board approved a revised proposal to acquire huge swathes of land from the United States Sugar Corporation for Everglades restoration. The amended agreement provides for the initial purchase of 73,000 acres of strategically located land south of Lake Okeechobee with options to purchase another 107,000 acres when economic and financial conditions improve. The pending River of Grass land acquisition will provide unprecedented opportunities to restore the Everglades in ways not previously imagined.

Being open to new ideas while retaining a steady hand on existing duties is a hallmark of the South Florida Water Management District. With the recent signing of a bill reauthorizing the agency's regional role, the District will continue to proudly serve the people and environment of the region well into the future.

PHOTO GALLERY: [Trace 500 years of water management in South Florida](#)

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